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**'SENIOR FELLOWS' COME TO COLLEGE IN SEARCH
OF MENTAL STIMULATION, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

DAYTON, Ohio — Like many University of Dayton students, Richard Davis is eager for Oct. 17 to arrive.

"It's homecoming!" shouts Davis, who is well into his second semester on campus. "I'm looking forward to the football game. I go to all of the sporting events!"

Davis admits that his social life is important to him. More worthy of pursuit than, ah, academic mastery. "Don't get me wrong," he quickly recovers. "I never have a problem with studying or attending classes."

It's just that at the age of 71 he's learned to "appreciate his priorities."

Davis and fellow UD classmates John McClure and Sara Hooks represent a growing trend of older, mostly retired adults who are trading in the proverbial rocking chair for a seat in the college classroom. They are returning to higher education — or coming for the first time — after decades of raising families and honing careers.

Through UD's Senior Fellows program, people 60 and older can audit up to two classes a semester for \$35. As part-time students they receive an ID card, which gives them access to the school's library and other facilities, reduced fees for the Physical Activities Center and arts and athletic events, and free lectures sponsored by the wellness program.

Most Senior Fellows come to college, they say, to keep mentally active and to mingle with a younger generation.

"Classes are good for the mind, they stir up curiosity and keep you young," says John McClure, a retired accountant from Kettering. "After retirement it is easy to sit at home and lose contact with the world around you. When people lose their purpose in life, they tend to give up on themselves."

Hooks, who began taking classes at UD 14 years ago, agrees with McClure.

"When my husband passed away, I had to do something to keep mentally alert," says

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the 82-year-old Oakwood resident. "You know, I grew up during the Depression and there was no money for college then. This is my chance to be a part of it."

It wasn't a matter of "killing time" that prompted Davis to hop a city bus headed for UD last year," explains the Dayton resident, who is taking an introductory course in personal computers and a history of sacred music class. "And it wasn't just to take up space in the classroom. I came to learn."

Hooks, who this semester is taking a literature class on world authors, says taking classes gives her love of reading structure and discipline. She will be required to read Homer's *Odyssey*, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* and Feodor Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*.

"I've read the first two books but I've never read *Crime and Punishment*. But I've always wanted to punish myself and read it," Hooks says with a soft laugh.

McClure (who says he's around 70), a 1950 UD graduate who earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, favors subjects such as psychology and anthropology. "I really enjoy the classes about people and relationships because that is what life is about."

Senior Fellow students, unlike most non-traditional programs, attend classes with the traditional 18- to 22-year-olds — an aspect older students seem to cherish.

"I never wanted to take any of these classes with people my age," says Hooks. "I spend most of my time with elderly women, so it does me good to be around these young people."

Davis, a professional drummer whose nickname derives from toting drumsticks in his back pocket as a youth, agrees and claims to have "about a hundred or more" friends who are traditional students.

"The first thing I noticed was how friendly everyone was," says the Dayton resident. "I can't walk around campus without someone asking me how I'm doing or how my classes are going. I've never seen anything like this before ... anywhere."

Senior Fellows, who number from 45 to 65 a semester, aren't the only ones who benefit from intergeneration classrooms, says Julie Mitchell, director of adult learning in the continuing education office.

"For the traditional student, it sends a signal very much in line with the Marianist belief in lifelong learning. These seniors exude this feeling, that learning is indeed a lifetime. It's exciting for a younger student to see this love of learning purely for learning's sake."

Michael Barnes, alumni chair in humanities, taught McClure in two classes. He, too, believes there are benefits to be gained by intergenerational learning.

"John gave the rest of the students a slightly different slant on issues," Barnes recalls, "a different perspective that they may not have considered."

And participation by the older students doesn't stop at the classroom door, says Mitchell recalling a retired engineer who became a close mentor to an engineering student and another who became treasurer of the student-run Model UN club.

And then there's Davis, who, when not attending class, studying, cheering for one of his Flyer teams or mingling with younger students over chicken and dumplings in the school cafeteria, rehearses with his swing band "The Little Big Band."

"We play a little bit of everything — big band, swing, polka, Latin," says Davis, who hopes to have his band play at Kennedy Union's student lounge this semester. "I think the younger students would enjoy it."

– 30 –

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